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Features

26 Road to Solitude

Photographer Leland Howard gives you an insider's glimpse of Idaho's highest peaks.

32 Into the Deep

Experience the Crater Lake effect for yourself, thanks to Oregon photographer Dennis Frates.

38 Room to Roam

Get to know five of our country's least-visited national parks.

Visitors to Crater Lake
Lodge take photographs
from an overlook.

PHOTO BY DENNIS FRATES

Contents

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2020 // VOL. 34 NO. 4

- 6 From the Editor
- 8 Mailbox

The Good Life

- 12 **Fresh Air**
Cycling across America, traveling with friends, and reader photos.
- 14 **Road Trip**
Spend the weekend exploring Midwest waterfalls.
- 18 **Country Almanac**
- 20 **Great American Road Trip Photo Contest**
Enter your vacation photos for a chance to win \$1,000.
- 22 **View from Our Place**
Readers discover the scenic treasures of life in Montana's Judith Mountains.

Heart & Soul

- 46 **Restored to Glory**
A century-old steam tractor makes a comeback.
- 48 **Looking Back**
Memories of carefree summer days on a farm in West Virginia.
- 50 **Animal Tales**
The passing of a family's beloved dog leads to a new chapter.
- 52 **Humor**
Sometimes a bargain at the flea market squeals "buyer beware."
- 54 **Life in Focus**
- 60 **Good Neighbors**
A chance meeting leads to years of friendship.
- 62 **Heirloom**
An antique wooden wall phone is a reminder of a great-grandmother's legacy.
- 64 **Submission Guidelines**
- 64 **Hidden Needle Contest**
- 66 **Parting Shots**



FRONT Big Bend National Park, Texas
PHOTO BY DAVID HENSLEY/GETTY IMAGES

BACK Farm kids, Sheridan, Montana
PHOTO BY AMBER BROMLEY



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GROWING UP IN ARIZONA, I was a little spoiled by easy access to wide-open spaces. Wherever I looked, mountains stood in the distance. Getting away from the crowds and back to nature entailed a quick drive to the nearest trail.

Of course, many of our readers are blessed to live with outdoor access right in their own backyards. On page 22, Betty Westburg shares the view from her homestead in Montana's Judith Mountains. She lives in a storied valley with plenty of wildlife and history.

However, some of us have to find that connection to the outdoors through travel. *Country* is here to show you the way. This issue takes you to remote places like Idaho's Lost River Range. Starting on page 26, photographer Leland Howard reveals his favorite adventure loop through the area. The sometimes off-road journey leads to charming small towns and places so remote that most people will only ever see them in photographs.

Our national parks are a little more accessible, and we have several featured in this issue. Crater Lake, Oregon's only national park and the deepest lake in America, is the star of Dennis Frates' article on page 32. And starting on page 38, editor Dana Meredith profiles five parks with lots of beauty and no crowds, including Big Bend in Texas, which is featured on the cover.

If you hit the road this summer, be sure to take lots of pictures and enter them in our new Great American Road Trip Photo Contest. You'll find details on page 20. Happy summer!

A handwritten signature of Marija Andric in blue ink.

Marija Andric, Deputy Editor
marija@country-magazine.com

Everyone has a story... what's yours?

Country is written by readers for readers. It's easy to share your stories and photos. Simply visit **country-magazine.com** and click Share Your Story. Give us your take on the topics below, and you might get published in a future issue:

Traveling With Pets

People love to travel with the furry members of their families. Tell us about the trips you've taken with your pets. Where did you go? Please label your submission **"Traveling With Pets."**

Humor

You plan the perfect trip and then the unexpected happens. Tell us about these momentary mishaps now that you can laugh about them. Please label your submission **"Travel Humor."**

Bucket List

Have you taken a trip that had been on your bucket list for a while? Did you take a trip to volunteer or to conquer a long-standing goal, such as hiking the Grand Canyon? Share your stories about goals fulfilled through travel. Label your submission **"Bucket List."**

Photo Tips

- Cameras and smartphones can capture large images. Send us unmodified originals (minimum file size is 1 MB).
- The more we know about the photo, the better! Tell us the time of year it was taken and identify the location. Be sure to include names for all people or pets.

See **page 64** for additional submission guidelines. Go to **country-magazine.com** and submit your story and photos!



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Dear Country...

Donald the rooster seems to like people more than chickens. He follows Grandpa Carlton all over the yard and tags along on rides in the golf cart to visit neighbors!

CAROL SUMNER
Murphy, North Carolina



THE SPECTACULAR PHOTO by Brent Young ("Morning Light," page 11) in the June/July issue gives one the impression that it is a painting done by a master artist rather than a mere photo. Perhaps it's a reminder that the Master Artist who fashioned this world also appreciates beauty.

JOEL MONTEITH *Preston, Missouri*

THANK YOU for bringing me back 35 years to Seneca Rocks in West Virginia in your June/July issue ("Appalachian Forest," page 45). My maternal grandparents were from Clarksburg, and my grandmother's sister lived "down the road" from Seneca at the Kisamore farm in Petersburg. Besides at Seneca Rocks, you could

also find us at Smoke Hole Caverns, where I'd swim with my sister in the cool waters.

The story of my grandparents walking from West Virginia in 1932 was published about six years ago in *Country* magazine. I miss those country roads!

BRENDA CALANDRILLO
Mahwah, New Jersey

I AM A CITY GIRL who has read your magazine for years. I truly enjoy the photos and personal stories of your readers. I was very pleased to see Cynthia Matlock's article "Calling the Cows" (page 12) in your June/July magazine.

It did my heart good to see the contributions of rural African Americans to agriculture. Please continue to highlight stories that reflect the beauty of America's diversity and the hard work that goes into making a life off the land. City girls like me appreciate the glimpses into a world where one can summon a cow with a well-honed swoo—I can barely get my dog to come on command. Impressive, indeed!

ANITA LOBANOV-ROSTOVSKY
Westminster, Colorado

On Facebook, we asked: This beautiful fox has something to say. What is it?



"Come closer and see what big teeth I have."

BETTY OWENS

"I'm just waiting for the chicken to cross the road."

BETH HOWARD

"Can I dance? Fox trot, of course!"

SHERRIE DAVIS



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The Good Life

Savor the simple pleasures

Majestic Mount Baker is a picturesque setting for an afternoon of fishing on East Bank Baker Lake.

Blissful Backdrop

In our neck of the woods, my family loves to be outdoors. The longer days filled with sunshine are exciting, because in the Pacific Northwest they're gone so quickly. We feel fortunate to live near the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest here in Washington state close to British Columbia.

One day my husband, Garrell, was fishing for trout at East Bank Baker Lake when some nearby campers rode up to see what was biting. Nothing says summer like biking to your favorite clear blue lake to fish the day away under snowcapped mountains.

KIMI LANFORD
Mukilteo, Washington

No GPS Needed

A FRIEND AND I have started going on jaunts we call Adventure Days. The purpose is to take a daytrip to any location and enjoy the little things along the way. The best part is that there is no itinerary. We just go and explore the sites on a whim.

On our last trip, we went to the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Strong City, Kansas. On the drive home, we saw the prettiest sunset I've ever seen. I love these days with my friend. They remind me that life is an adventure and that there is beauty everywhere you look.

JASMINE HADDOCK
Derby, Kansas



BICYCLING WITH BIGFOOT



I took up bicycling as a way to continue exercising into my later years. It gave me the chance to check a lot of items off my bucket list. I also discovered another benefit: When your world slows down from 70 mph to 7, it's amazing what you notice.

For example, people who live in rural areas have a wonderful sense of humor. During one summer, my girlfriend, Kim, and I toured Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The hardest part of the entire trip was trying to keep the chipmunks out of our snacks at the various campgrounds. Pedaling south out of Grand Marais along M77, we had gone only 8 miles when we were greeted by a huge hill. We had to dismount and

push our bicycles. That's when we spied large, mysterious footprints trekking across the highway. Finally, proof positive that Bigfoot really exists!

Someone had made footprints out of plywood, dipped them in white paint and stamped them across the highway. Obviously, someone in the Upper Peninsula is having a good chuckle!

JOHN SCANLAN
Hilton Head Island,
South Carolina





LOVE AT FIRST BITE



HANDS OFF!

Silas, our sweet grandson, loves to be outdoors and to eat. Those little hands weren't letting go of that watermelon for anything!

AMANDA GINN
Rincon, Georgia

THE APPLE OF HER EYE

Brynlee, my 10-month-old granddaughter, enjoyed her first sweet taste of an apple during a picnic.

CHARLOTTE PLETCHER
Somerset, Pennsylvania

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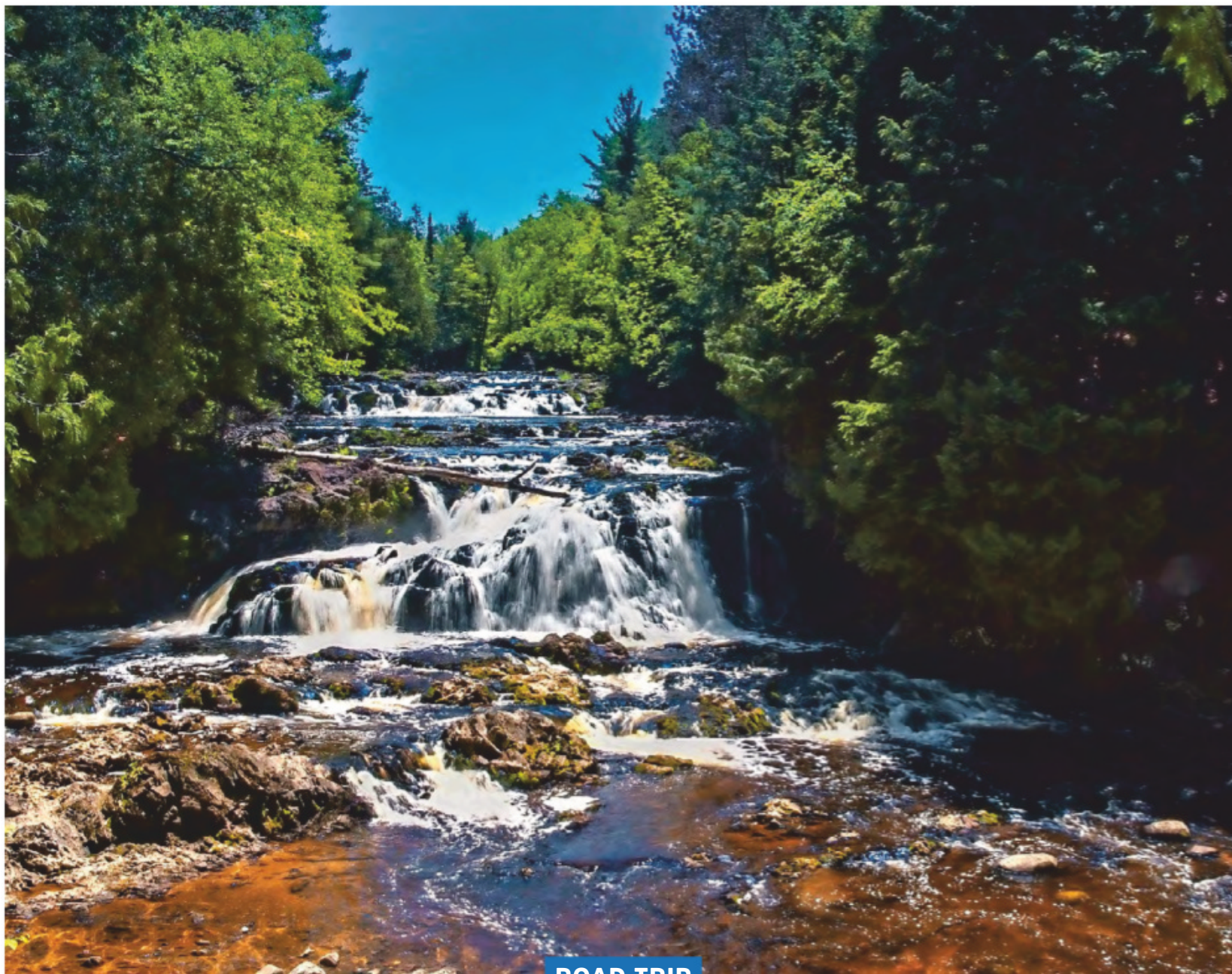
In 1883, the new U.S. nickel featured only a large "V" for the 5 cent denomination — V is five in Roman numerals. Racketeers and hustlers gold-plated some of the new coins and passed them off as \$5 gold pieces. The deaf mute Josh Tatum was the most notorious — his lawyer got him off by claiming that Tatum couldn't tell merchants it was merely a nickel and "I was only joshing you" entered the language.

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ROAD TRIP

WATERFALL WEEKEND

Reflect and recharge while exploring cascading waters in Wisconsin and Michigan. **BY THEODORE SADLER** Minneapolis, Minnesota

EXPLORING THE WATERFALLS

of Iron County, Wisconsin, is the perfect weekend getaway.

Located on the northern edge of the state, Iron County borders Michigan's Upper Peninsula and the mighty Gitchie Gumee, also known as Lake Superior.

I left my home in Minneapolis early Saturday morning and drove about four hours to my first trip destination, scenic Copper Falls State Park.

Along the way I drove past the huge majestic pine trees of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National

Forest. The trees, the deep blue sky, the incandescent sun and the cool air of Wisconsin's North Woods invigorated my spirit as I stepped out of the car.

That day I explored the marvels of Copper Falls and its neighbor, Brownstone Falls. The 1.7-mile Doughboys Trail winds around both waterfalls, offering lovely views of them.

The park is home to many falls and to rustic log buildings and trails constructed in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. You can hike, mountain bike, fish

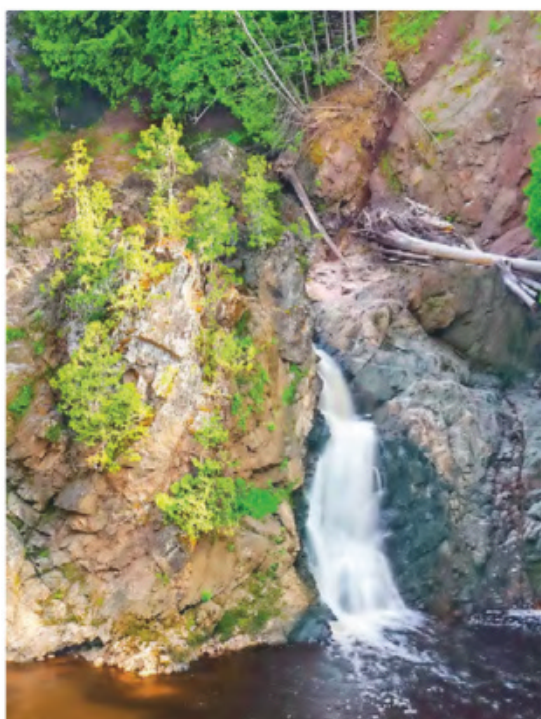
or swim in the park (Loon Lake has 300 feet of beach).

This was just the beginning. With ease and a relaxed pace, I continued my journey northeast about 15 miles on Highway 169 to Potato River Falls, where I stood in awe before what some consider to be the state's most beautiful cascade. I continued northeast to see Saxon Falls and, finally, Superior Falls, both just over the Michigan border.

The day ended with a short drive into Ashland, Wisconsin, where I stayed at a hotel overlooking the



The cool air of Wisconsin's North Woods invigorated my spirit.



Clockwise from left: Cascades of Tyler Forks River in Copper Falls State Park; Ashland Marina at sunset; Saxon Falls in Michigan; and Brownstone Falls.

marina. A thunderstorm struck in the pre-dawn hours, affording me spectacular photos of the stormy sky over Lake Superior.

After an early breakfast, I headed out to my last stop on this waterfall tour: Morgan Falls.

While very remote and a tad out of the way, this final waterfall was well worth the effort. At the end of a short hike on a wide, flat path, Morgan Falls is just surreal in its beauty: It looks like something created for an amusement park. Morgan Falls is definitely a location I will be returning to in the future!

As I bid farewell to my Wisconsin waterfall weekend, I already began planning my return trip to see other falls in the area. Leaving the national forest and driving south along the byways and highways, I saw the landscape gradually transition from majestic forests to rural farmland. Arriving home late Sunday afternoon, I felt revived and ready for the week ahead. ⚙️

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TRIP GUIDE

Wander Wisconsin's waterfalls or explore nearby towns with Great Lakes charm.

Copper Falls State Park

This gem of a park is located near Lake Superior in Iron County. Waterfalls, gorges, and hiking and mountain biking trails await visitors. Hike 4 miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail, which will one day stretch from New York to North Dakota.

dnr.wi.gov

Ashland

Known as the mural capital of Wisconsin, Ashland is a good place to eat, stay and play while exploring the area's waterfalls. Tour the eight-block historic Main Street and experience the town's history and culture through the murals painted on the buildings.

Ashland Breakwater Lighthouse

See one of the few lighthouses built using reinforced concrete. It stands at the end of a long breakwater in Lake Superior.

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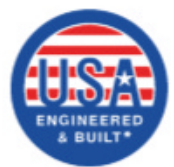
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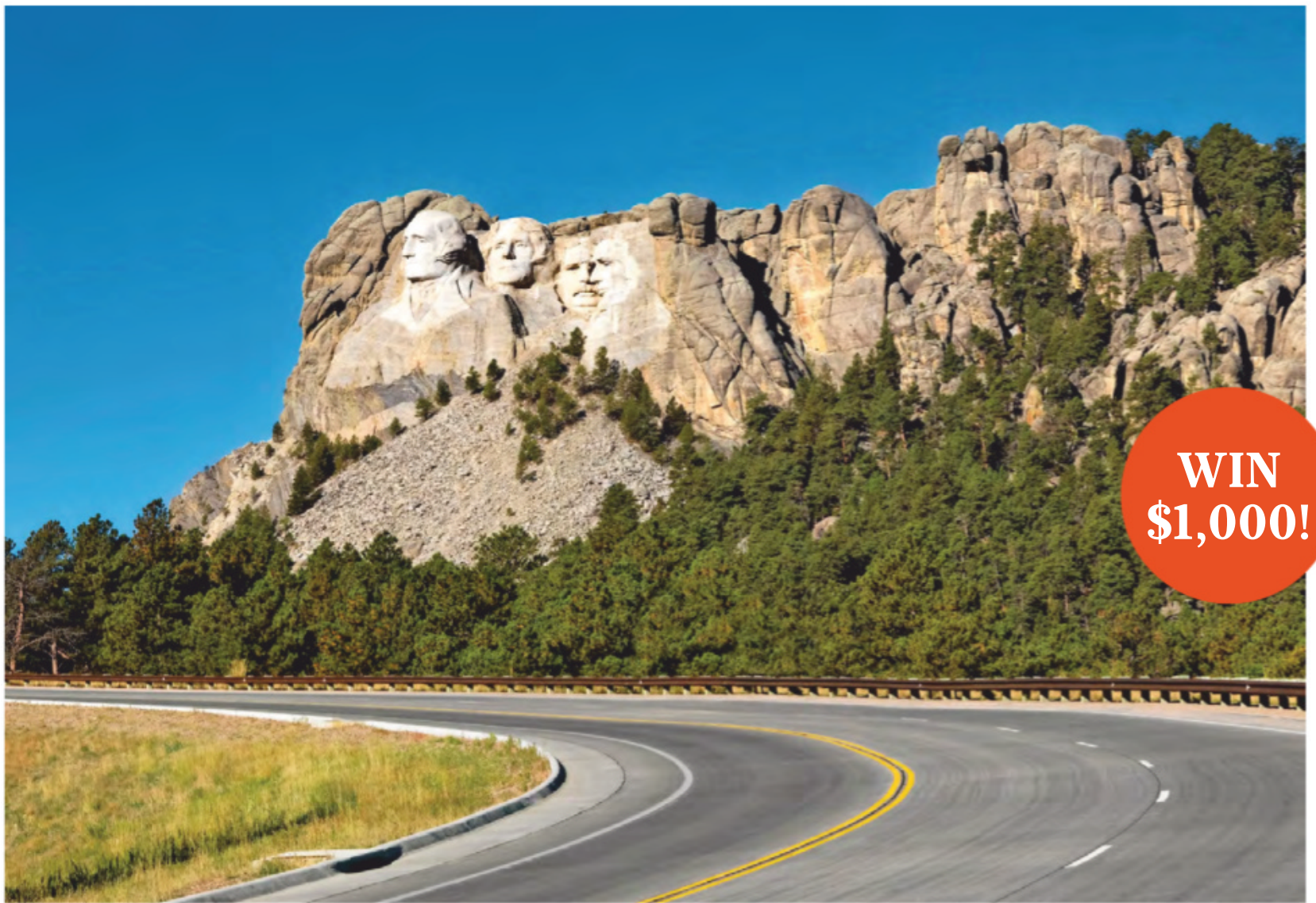
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Our Pot of Gold

In a corner of Montana known for mining and outlaws, my husband and I found a scenic treasure.

BY BETTY WESTBURG Lewistown, Montana



Far from the hustle and bustle of crowded city streets, my husband, Albert, and I live in a place we call Whisky.

Tucked into the foothills of Montana's Judith Mountains, Whisky is just over the ridge off the old Gilt Edge Stage Road, stretching up Whisky Gulch to the west. As the crow flies, it is a dozen or so miles from Lewistown, the geographic center of Montana.

Our roots go back to the state's homesteading days. Albert and I have lived all our lives in Montana. We built our home, which sits on

the lower end of the northern ridge, in 2014. We have spent the past years completing the house, building some of the outbuildings, clearing brush, putting up fencing and taking care of the land. Our two sons, Dana and Nick, are grown and live in the Billings area with their families.

The views from Whisky are gorgeous in every direction and during each season. Throughout the spring and summer months, wildflowers add a palette of yellow, blue, white, pink and purple hues to the green landscape.

Lush meadows rise up to meet the mountain foothills on the north, west and south, and to the east is an open prairie vista for as far as the eye can see.

In winter, snow blankets the landscape, and the air is cool and crisp. The wind swirls the snow around, creating drifts that look

like dollops of fresh whipped cream. When the sun shines, the snow-covered landscape sparkles like diamonds. Although it is beautiful to look at, the snow and wind can sometimes create a challenge for our getting to town and back, since we must drive up our lane and the 7 miles of county road before reaching pavement.

As we go about our daily work, we feel very blessed to live in Whisky! In the meadow to the north, during the summer months, the black hides of the neighbor's cattle glisten in the sun as some graze while others lie in the cool green grass, chewing their cud.

Some folks might find living out here in the boondocks boring or lonely, but the beautiful scenery that changes from season to season along with the domestic and wild animals and birds that inhabit the area keep us entertained.



Sam and Homer, our horse and donkey, contentedly browse in the pasture just below our house near one of Homer's "wallows" which is a concave circle that he has pawed clear of vegetation, where he rolls in the dirt numerous times daily.

Homer is our watchdog and will snort loudly at anyone or anything



Albert and Betty (inset) built their home (above) on a site with lovely views of the mountains (far left). In winter, snow covers the driveway. Below: Homer smells the flowers.

that he feels is abnormal. Myriad wild things—deer, antelope, elk, meadowlarks, hawks, blackbirds and bluebirds, bears, eagles, owls, mountain lions, turkeys, skunks, rabbits, snakes, hummingbirds, crows, moose and others—provide endless amusement each day.

The rich history of the area intrigues us as we imagine life as it was during the turn of the 20th century. Looking northeast from the ridge in the far corner of our property, Black Butte, a big lone butte at the east end of the Judith Mountains, rises majestically above the plains. Native Americans used the topmost part of the butte as a signal point, where they built fires and made smoke signals with buffalo skins.

A few miles southwest of Black Butte, along Brickyard Creek, Bertie Brown's cabin still stands. Originally from Missouri, she was

among a very small number of African American women who homesteaded alone in Montana. She was in her 20s when she settled in this area in 1898. Bertie was one of the best moonshine makers in the country, and my grandfather traveled miles out of his way to buy her brew, which she sold either by the drink or by the bottle. Her place was always spic and span, and folks were welcome to stop in anytime.

During the gold mining era of the 1880s and early 1900s, Gilt Edge was a thriving mining town with a population of nearly 1,500. We've heard that there were six general stores, a butcher shop, a bakery, two drugstores, a post office, a restaurant, a clothing store, two barbershops, six hotels and boardinghouses, a church, a school, a hospital, a funeral parlor, four livery barns, a dance hall, two blacksmith shops, 13 saloons, one blind pig (a liquor store that did not have a license and sold whiskey out of the back door) and a jail.

And Gilt Edge had quite a few infamous residents. Calamity Jane, a legendary frontierswoman and sharpshooter, lived in Gilt Edge for a time, and the outlaw Kid Curry occasionally visited the town.



The sun sets on another glorious day at Whisky.

When the mines shut down, businesses either closed or moved elsewhere, many of the townsfolk left and the town dwindled. Gilt Edge is much quieter nowadays. Skeletons of some of the original buildings, including the jail and one of the bordellos, still stand as silent reminders of the town's past.

Mother Nature fills the silence in her own ways. One day I admire

the colorful blooms, and the next I wake up to white stuff on the ground. Maybe the electricity will go out. And if it does, we'll fire up the grill to heat water collected from the snow to make coffee and hot meals.

No worries, though; rest assured that all is well at Whisky. Here in our native Big Sky Country, we've found our pot of gold. ☀

BETTY'S TOP 3

Chokecherry Festival

In the wilds of Montana, the chokecherry grows and is celebrated every September in Lewistown. Savor the flavors, shop for arts and crafts and take in the scenery. lewistownchokecherry.com

Wildlife Watching

Grab your binoculars and reserve a campsite at Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in September and October to watch the elk herds gather for the breeding season. fws.gov/refuge/Charles_M_Russell

Charlie Russell Chew Choo Dinner Train

Climb aboard for dinner and a relaxing ride to Denton, but beware: Masked bandits known as the Salt Creek Gang may hold up the train! montanadinnertrain.com

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

DEAR DARRYL: My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

Clogged and Smelly – Scranton, PA

DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY: As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

This fast-acting bacteria multiplies within minutes of application and is specifically designed to withstand many of today's anti-bacterial cleaners, soaps and detergents. It comes in dissolvable plastic packs, that you just flush down your toilets. It's so cool. Plus, they actually Guarantee that it restores ANY system, no matter how bad the problem is.

SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs are designed to work on any septic system regardless of design or age. From modern day systems to sand mounds, and systems installed generations ago, I have personally seen SeptiCleanse unclog and restore these systems in a matter of weeks. I highly recommend that you try it before spending any money on repairs. SeptiCleanse products are available online at www.septicleanse.com or you can order or learn more by calling toll free at 1-888-899-8345. If you use the promo code "CS1", you can get a free shock treatment, added to your order, which normally costs \$169. So, make sure you use that code when you call or buy online.

| R O A D T O

Birch Creek flows
past the Lemhi Range
at sunrise.



FOLLOW THIS IDAHO ADVENTURE LOOP OFF-ROAD TO PLACES OF

S O L I T U D E |



UNFORGETTABLE BEAUTY. **STORY AND PHOTOS BY LELAND HOWARD**



Stark. That's how some would describe the beauty of the land between Idaho's Lost River Range and the Lemhi Mountain Range. Funny, but that word never crossed my mind.

With the tallest mountains in Idaho, the Lost River Range is home to seven peaks topping 12,000 feet, including the state's tallest, Mount Borah. In the summer hikers, climbers, outdoor lovers and other adventurers arrive to conquer these summits.

I've spent much of my career as a landscape photographer climbing

these rocks, looking for the perfect shot. The best way to explore this area of east-central Idaho is to take what I call the Idaho adventure loop, which follows two historic highways—93 and 28—to scenic wonders.

Exploration of this route requires an adventurous frame of mind and four-wheel drive. The wandering traveler willing to get off the pavement will discover small towns with unique character and places so beautiful they escape description.

LOST RIVER RANGE

Arco, a small town with a population

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This old tramway was built in 1917 and can be seen in the White Knob Mountains near Mackay. Continuing clockwise: A fly fisherman casts his line at Basin Lake in the Lemhi Range; Lost River Range at sunrise.



of about 880 and the first city in the world to be lit by atomic power, is the start of the adventure tour. Notice the hill with numbers? Each year the senior class paints their graduating year on the rocks. It's an impressive sight and a reminder that small-town life is still vibrant. From Arco, you take Highway 93 farther north to Mackay and through the Lost River Valley, where the peaks become increasingly tall and rugged.

Mackay (pronounced "Mackie") is even smaller than Arco but has a rich mining and pioneer history. Some journalists have called this little town

**IDAHO IS
THE ONLY
INLAND
STATE
WHERE
YOU CAN
FISH FOR
STEELHEAD
AND KING
SALMON.**

the best kept secret in Idaho, citing its western charm, character and proximity to the best hiking and camping in the Lost River Range.

The tour of Mackay's Mine Hill is a must-do. It's self-guided (you can pick up a map at a local restaurant, your lodging or the tourist information center), and the tour covers all of Mackay's mining sites. However, you can drive only up to a certain point. After that, consider hiking, mountain biking or riding an ATV.

North of Mackay, the views of the Lost River are impressive as steep mountains suddenly rise from

sagebrush-covered moraines below. The Big Lost River to the west of the highway caps off the views, especially around early October when the valley glows with golden cottonwood trees.

In 1983 these mountains and the valley shifted apart dramatically, about 14 feet in some places, due to a powerful quake that registered 7.3 on the Richter scale. The resulting fault scarp can still be seen on the lower hills below Mount Borah.

SCENIC DETOUR

Upon reaching the Salmon River, 93 intersects with 75. Here you'll see lodges between ranch lands, private property, fishing holes and several campgrounds. This section of the wild and scenic Salmon River flows to the northeast from its origins in the Sawtooth Mountains and White Clouds Wilderness Area.

When I'm looking for guaranteed solitude and have plenty of time to just take it slow on dirt roads, I opt for a leisurely detour down Road 11, heading southeast through the tiny towns of May and Patterson (the turn is about one-third of the way to Salmon from

ORIGINATING
IN THE
SAWTOOTH
AND LEMHI
VALLEYS,
THE SALMON
RIVER IS
KNOWN AS
"THE RIVER
OF NO
RETURN."

the intersection with Highway 75). Not long after Patterson, the road becomes gravel. The views are striking—vast, open sagebrush plains and mighty mountains rising in the distance. But my favorite spot is where the Lost River Range meets the headwaters of the Pahsimeroi River, a tributary to the Salmon River.

LEMHI MOUNTAINS

Back on 93, the rustic town of Salmon lies at the northern tip of the Lemhi Range, which runs along the east side of the adventure loop. Salmon's origins include mining, lumber and family ranching. Time passes and cultures change. Now a visitor will find art galleries along with fishing, rafting, hunting and adventure guides. Numerous restaurants and lodging opportunities are available; however, I can say this town still certainly deserves the rustic designation.

Perhaps its biggest claim to fame is the fairly recent completion of the Sacajawea Interpretive, Cultural and Educational Center. Sacajawea, who guided explorers Lewis and Clark on their expedition to the Pacific Ocean,





was born in the Lemhi Valley, and the park is an impressive tribute. It's open year-round, and the gardens and trails throughout the 71-acre park make it a worthwhile detour. A bronze sculpture of Sacajawea standing with mountains in the background is an admirable accolade to a remarkable woman.

Back on the adventure loop, head southeast on Highway 28 as it climbs toward Gilmore Summit. Gilmore is a fascinating ghost town situated on the pass just a couple of miles to the west of the highway. Drive from Gilmore Summit and see vast views of public land. Water from the mountains on both sides collects in the valley to form Birch Creek.

More canyons invite exploration, and a good route with historical

interest isn't far south from the pass. A dirt road takes you west to the Birch Creek Charcoal Kilns Interpretive Site, which has century-old beehive-shaped kilns built to produce charcoal for nearby mines. The kilns are to the north of Diamond Peak, which, at 12,197 feet, is the highest in the Lemhi Range. This peak is about 35 miles from Mount Borah. There are many easy pullouts farther south along Birch Creek where campers can fish waters with mountain views.

Highway 33 west leads back to Arco, the starting point of our journey. To get the most out of a trip to this area, take your time. Unwind, enjoy the silence of these natural landscapes and watch the sun rise and set over high mountain peaks. ⚙

Indian Paintbrush and other wildflowers carpet a ridge in the Beaverhead Mountains (above). In Salmon, a bronze statue of Sacajawea holding her infant son is a reminder of her critical role in Lewis and Clark's expedition to the Pacific Ocean (left).





INTO THE DEEP

DELVE IN TO THE WONDER
AND MYSTERY OF
OREGON'S CRATER LAKE

STORY & PHOTOS BY DENNIS FRATES

Rubber rabbitbrush,
a popular snack with
deer, blooms on the
edge of Crater Lake.



The first time my then-10-year-old daughter saw Crater Lake National Park, her jaw just dropped. Before her were the deep blue waters of a lake surrounded by jagged peaks—the remains of a mighty mountain known as Mazama.

“You told me this was a beautiful lake, but I had no idea it was this incredible,” Nicki said at the time.

That is the Crater Lake effect.

This magical and majestic place is the only national park in Oregon and the deepest lake in the United States. Though Crater Lake isn’t among the most visited national parks, it should be. It is an awe-inspiring weekend getaway. Here are the things that I love to do in this scenic wonder.

DRIVE THE RIM

Crater Lake’s rim tops out at 8,000 feet, allowing snow to remain until early summer. The best time to visit is in July and August when all the snow is mostly gone, the wildflowers are in bloom and the historic Rim Drive is open. This

33-mile route is the easiest and most popular way to see the national park. It should take up to 40 minutes to complete the drive if you don’t stop.

But you will stop, because beneath the serene dark blue waters sits a dormant volcano that literally blew its top more than 7,700 years ago, leaving behind the caldera we see today.

Over time, lava cooled and sealed the bottom. Rain and snow melt filled the caldera with pristine and fresh water, creating the 1,943-foot-deep lake. The depth and clarity explain why the color of the lake is one of its most noteworthy attributes. As sunlight penetrates the lake, it absorbs all the colors of visible light except for blue, which it reflects back. The deeper and clearer the water, the more magnificent the reflected blue becomes. The hue is so unique that it is referred to as Crater Lake blue.

As you make your way around the lake, get peekaboo views of Wizard Island and Phantom Ship Island. There are a few places to see wildflower fields, too. You



could easily spend the day on this leisurely drive. If you'd rather someone else take the wheel, hop on the Crater Lake Trolley, which makes up to seven stops along its two-hour tour of Rim Drive. Plus, a ranger is on board to share trivia and fun facts about the park.

HIT THE TRAILS

Some visitors want more than a jaunt around the rim. These folks lace up their boots and trek the park's 90 miles of trails. Ranging from easy to challenging, these paths lead to amazing views.

Pinnacles Trail will have you thinking you are in the Badlands of South Dakota. In this truly unique geologic area, the spear-shaped pinnacles formed when hot ash cooled after the big eruption.

Watchman Peak Trail takes you to a fire lookout above Wizard Island and is known as one of the best spots in the park to watch the sunset.

The rocky climb of the Garfield Peak Trail winds past wildflowers and unusual vegetation. You might even spot a marmot



From far left: Visitors take in the view from an overlook at Crater Lake Lodge; the park has 400 species of plants, including penstemon; a golden-mantled ground squirrel nibbles on an almond.

or two. If you are up for a bit of a more adventurous hike, consider the one to Mount Scott, the highest peak in the park. The 4.5-mile round-trip hike is best undertaken in the early morning hours. Another sunrise sensation is Discovery Point Trail. The breathtaking views of a blue sky filled with displays of orange and red are your visual reward for getting up before dawn.



EXPLORE THE WATER

Just one trail actually leads to the water's edge—the Cleetwood Cove Trail. It is moderately steep, but only about 2.2 miles long. Cleetwood Cove is the only shoreline where swimmers can enter the lake. The water is about 57 degrees in summer, so be prepared for a chilly reception.

If you'd rather not wade into the water or take a summertime version of a polar plunge, set sail on a boat tour of the lake.

the rare black-backed and three-toed woodpeckers. Common mergansers can be seen on the lake, and calls of songbirds permeate the forests and meadows.

Mammal sightings are far less common, but a wide variety of animals inhabit the terrain around the lake, including bobcats, gray wolves, red foxes, cougars and several species of marten, to name but a few. Expect to encounter several white-tailed deer, since they seem oblivious to visitors.



Eight tours depart Cleetwood Cove daily. There are a couple of options: a two-hour trip that will take you around the caldera or a longer trip that includes a stop at Wizard Island (the boat tour is the only way to get there). The latter gives visitors a chance to swim and explore the island, which is actually a cinder cone formed during later eruptions. It's a terrific outing for kids because they can experience one of the lake's standout volcanic features.

WILDLIFE WATCHING

Crater Lake and its surrounding forest filled with mountain hemlock and pine are home to an abundance of birds. Spot eagles and peregrine falcons along the rim cliffs or look for American dipper near streams. Wildfire-burned forests attract several species of woodpeckers, including

THE LODGE

Even if you opt to stay outside the park or in a campground, don't miss a visit to historic Crater Lake Lodge. Originally opened in 1915, the lodge takes you back to the rustic charm of the 1920s. If you do choose to stay, it is an experience you will never forget.

Located on the edge of the caldera and overlooking the lake, the lodge has fantastic views of this natural wonder. Rise with the sun in the morning and eat a hearty breakfast before heading out to the trails, or upon your return refuel with an elegant dinner and sip a glass of wine in the dining room.

As a landscape photographer, I have always been drawn to Crater Lake. I was delighted that Nicki recognized its beauty so many years ago. Although I don't know if our trip planted some kind of seed, today she is a landscape photographer, too. Crater Lake is truly a magical place. ☀

If you choose to stay, it is an experience you will never forget.

An intrepid swimmer jumps into Crater Lake (left). Swimming is permitted at Cleetwood Cove. Above: Historic Crater Lake Lodge is a landmark in the park, charming visitors since 1915 with its rustic architecture.

5 National Parks with Room to Roam

In 2019, the Grand Canyon had nearly 6 million visitors. Grand, yes, but you can experience nature's beauty without the crowds at five under-the-radar national parks. These American treasures offer gorgeous vistas, geological wonders and amazing biodiversity—yet they are some of the least-visited parks in the nation. Who wouldn't want an amazing adventure with a little extra elbow room?

BY DANA MEREDITH, EDITOR



WHEN TO GO
Mid-June to October

2019 VISITORS
38,208

MUST SEE
Ladder Creek Falls

BEST VIEWS

- Diablo Lake Overlook
- Washington Pass Overlook

PLAN YOUR TRIP
nps.gov/noca

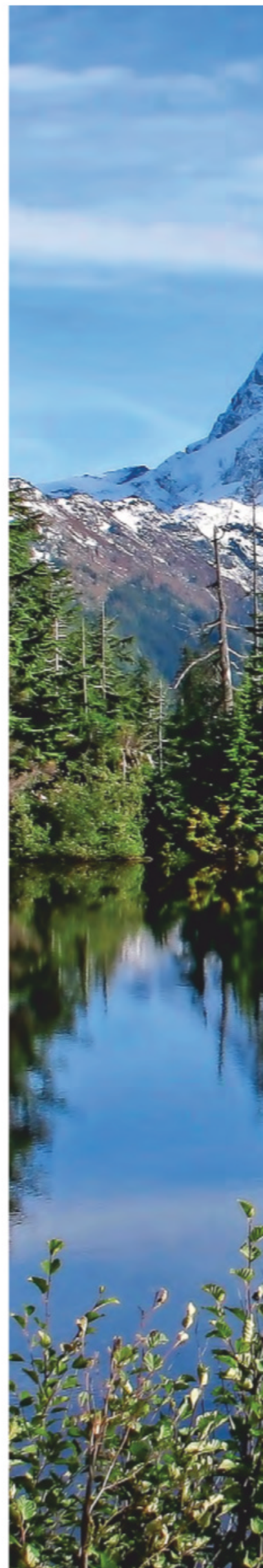
1 North Cascades National Park, Washington

CRYSTAL CLEAR GLACIAL LAKES, RUGGED MOUNTAINS and alpine landscapes await you just three hours north of Seattle along North Cascades Highway (state Route 20). The road cuts across 684,237 acres of the North Cascades National Park Service Complex, an area stretching from the Canadian border through the Ross Lake National Recreation Area to Lake Chelan.

Start at North Cascades Visitor Center near Newhalem and drive east past captivating scenic overlooks, hiking trails of varying levels, campgrounds, climbing areas and riding trails. Take an easy hike to Ladder Creek Falls or a short walk on the fully accessible Sterling Munro Viewpoint trail to see dramatic views of the remote Picket Range. And don't miss Diablo Lake.

The park's diverse ecosystem is home to elusive mammals such as the gray wolf, at least 28 species of fish and more than 200 bird species. In addition, 260 archaeological sites have been identified—some older than 8,500 years—including mining camps, fire lookouts and sheep herder camps. Scenery, wildlife, history and recreation—North Cascades National Park has it all.

Rising more than 9,000 feet, Mount Shuksan overlooks pristine Picture Lake in North Cascades National Park.





MADHULIKA SARUPRIA/GETTY IMAGES

**WHEN TO GO**

Spring or fall

2019 VISITORS

159,445

MUST SEE

Fireflies Festival,
mid-May to
mid-June

BEST VIEWS

- Boardwalk Loop Trail
- Weston Lake Loop Trail

PLAN YOUR TRIP

nps.gov/cong

2 Congaree National Park, South Carolina

GAZE SKYWARD THROUGH TOWERING bald cypress, loblolly pines and tupelo trees in the middle of the largest and tallest old-growth bottomland hardwood forest east of the Mississippi. The cacophony of buzzing insects, croaking frogs and hooting owls is joined by the rustling of turkeys, deer and wild boar in the brush. The amazing biodiversity of Congaree National Park reveals itself in nearly 27,000 acres of flood plain 20 minutes east of Columbia.

This free park is not a swamp, but the nearby Congaree and Wateree rivers flood around 10 times annually, leaving behind nutrients that rejuvenate this eerie ecosystem. Check the Harry Hampton Visitor Center for trail maps and current conditions. Hike the easy 2.4-mile Boardwalk Loop Trail through the forest, or take the Weston Lake Loop Trail around the lake. Explore the Cedar Creek Canoe Trail in your canoe, or paddle the 50-mile Congaree River Blue Trail from Columbia to the park.

From mid-May to mid-June, Congaree hosts one of only three species of synchronous flashing fireflies in North America. Check with the park for dates and times of the annual Fireflies Festival.

Afternoon sun filters through a tangle of bald cypress trees in Congaree National Park.



JOHN ELK/GETTY IMAGES



MARK C STEVENS/GETTY IMAGES



WHEN TO GO
July to October
(Check for road conditions.)

2019 VISITORS
517,039

MUST SEE
Lassen Dark-Sky
Festival, Aug.
14-15

BEST VIEWS
• Bumpass Hell
• Manzanita
Lake

PLAN YOUR TRIP
nps.gov/lavo

3 Lassen Volcanic National Park, California

FROM BUBBLING HYDROTHERMAL mud pots to one of the largest plug-dome volcanoes in the world, these 106,452 acres look like the setting for a sci-fi movie, but they make up Northern California's least-visited national park. The steep and winding 30-mile Lassen Volcanic National Park Highway transports you through dense forest from one amazing scenic overlook to the next (many with picnic areas and lakes). You'll see unbeatable views throughout the park from the comfort of your car.

But hop out and see geology in action on Bumpass Hell Trail, a moderate 3-mile hike—one option of 150 miles of trails that wind through forests and past lakes—to the largest hydrothermal area of the park. Rise at dawn from one of the park's campgrounds or the rustic Drakesbad Guest Ranch and hike the easy 1.5-mile Manzanita Lake Trail to catch sublime morning views of Lassen Peak. There is no motorized boating on the park's 20 beautiful lakes, but you can rent a canoe or a kayak for exploring. If you're adventurous, hike up to the summit of Lassen Peak. Stops at the Kohm Yah-mah-nee Visitor Center and the Loomis Museum showcase the park's history and highlight the area's eruptions.

Rising steam mists the air at the Bumpass Hell hydrothermal area in Lassen Volcanic National Park.

**WHEN TO GO**

November to April

2019 VISITORS

463,832

MUST SEE

Hiking Lost Mine Trail

BEST VIEWS

- Santa Elena Canyon
- Chisos Mountains

PLAN YOUR TRIP

nps.gov/bibe

4 Big Bend National Park, Texas

WITH ARID DESERT, ALPINE LANDSCAPE, rugged mountains and massive canyons, Big Bend National Park is breathtaking. Rising from an elevation of 1,800 feet along the legendary Rio Grande to nearly 8,000 feet in the Chisos Mountains, the park's more than 800,000 acres of diverse habitats support 1,200 types of plants, around 450 bird species and varied wildlife including mountain lions and javelinas. You can't see everything in one day, but take the paved Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive for a sampling of what the park has to offer. Improved and primitive dirt roads crisscross the park, and gravel roads are open to horse riders.

Admire the rocky Chisos Mountains on your way to the Sam Nail Ranch, a historic homestead area known for excellent bird-watching. Take in the panoramic view of the desert floor atop the Sotol Vista Overlook, spy the two mountain peaks at Mule Ears Viewpoint, or stretch your legs with a hike into the deep and narrow Tuff Canyon.

End your drive at magnificent Santa Elena Canyon. Take the easy 1.7-mile round-trip hike to see one of Big Bend's most scenic spots on the banks of the Rio Grande.

Habitats from desert floor to cool mountains invite diverse wildlife and birds into Big Bend National Park.



JOHN ELK/GETTY IMAGES



DAVID HENSLEY/GETTY IMAGES



WHEN TO GO

Summer to early fall

2019 VISITORS

131,802

MUST SEE

Astronomy Festival, Sept. 17-19, 2020

BEST VIEWS

- Lehman Caves
- Wheeler Peak

PLAN YOUR TRIP

nps.gov/grba

5 Great Basin National Park, Nevada

THE GNARLED BRANCHES of bristlecone pines, thought to be among the oldest living organisms on Earth, are only one of the natural wonders you'll find in Great Basin National Park. Sweeping across 77,000 acres, the park's drastic elevation changes—from desert valley floor to 13,000-foot Wheeler Peak—encompass springs, fossils, subterranean caves, a glacier and dizzying arrays of plant, animal and bird species.

Explore the fantastic formations within Lehman Caves (reservations required), then drive the 12-mile paved Wheeler Peak Scenic Drive. Rising 4,000 feet, you'll travel through five eco-regions, with plenty of scenic pullouts for photo-ops. The drive connects with popular hiking trails that lead to alpine lakes, the Bristlecone Pine Interpretive Trail, Wheeler Peak Summit Trail and more.

Spend a day fishing in Lehman Creek, visit Upper Pictograph Cave to see ancient Fremont Indian rock art or stargaze in this designated dark-sky park where you can see the Milky Way with the naked eye on a summer night. The park may be remote, but you'll find so much waiting for you to discover when you arrive.

Wheeler Peak soars above an ancient bristlecone pine in Great Basin National Park.

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— J. Fitzgerald, VA



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Heart & Soul

Love. Laugh. Inspire.

In the summer our family gears up for 4-H equine competitions and good old hometown rodeos. Here, son Ezra watches the barrel races in Milan, Tennessee, from the top of the horse trailer.

HOLLY POWELL
Jackson, Tennessee



RESTORED TO GLORY

Fire It Up!

With a mighty hiss, our family's century-old steam tractor came back to life, reminding us of days gone by.

BY ROD CHANDLER Wilsonville, Oregon

That Saturday was a bright and clear morning in the Grande Ronde Valley. Puffy clouds floated in the cobalt sky above Mount Emily—a perfect summer day in northeast Oregon.

My son John, my brother Eldon and my wife, Joyce, drove with me down a lane bordered by lush, green waist-high barley into the yard of what had been the turn-of-the-century homestead of my grandfather, John Alden Chandler. My cousin Dale Chandler owns the farm now and has built a new house and shop. Only the old root cellar, where potatoes, onions and the like were kept, still exists.

As we drove into the yard, Dale looked up from where he was working on the old steam traction engine he had restored (“traction

engine” was later shortened to “tractor”). He beamed at us like a kid with a brand new toy. He had invited us to share some Oregon history with him and his family and to recall some sweet memories of a country-kid childhood. Dale had fired up the old steamer and wanted my family to be there for the “rollout.” I parked my pickup to the side, and we were greeted by Dale and his wife, Shari.

After the hugs and hellos, Dale went back to preparing the steam tractor for the day. The object of all our attention was the J.I. Case Co. steam traction engine No. 30302.

To Dale, this steam tractor represents memories of his father, Grant Chandler—who was his hero and mechanical mentor—and his childhood. Back then old machines were noisy behemoths that brought friends and family together.

Uncle Grant loved machines. Many who grew up in the Grande Ronde Valley remember the times when Uncle Grant would fire up a steam tractor and drive it along the country roads.

Family rides along for the steam tractor's rollout (above). Dale lets off a little steam before putting the tractor in motion.



So when Dale called recently to tell me he planned to fire up the steamer, there was no way I was going to miss this occasion.

The machinery came to the family in 1939. My Uncle Grant heard about a farmer with a steam tractor for sale on a ranch near Wolf Creek outside North Powder. He bought the rig and drove it the nearly 40 miles from the ranch to his home. With the tractor moving at 4 mph, it was a long, slow-going day. Uncle Grant's wife, Arda, drove alongside in an old car, towing a trailer filled with wood.

My older brother Eldon was 9 at the time, and Uncle Grant let him ride along for a short part of the trip—a memory from almost 80 years ago that today is as vivid for Eldon as if it had happened yesterday. Later, Eldon helped Uncle Grant with one of the many repairs.

"I was the only one small enough to fit through the water tank door," Eldon said.

When Uncle Grant passed away in the early 1980s, no one was around to care for the steam tractors he owned, so they were sold. No. 30302 went to a man who lived in Imbler, a small farm village northeast of La Grande. He was a hobbyist as well, but when he died, the tractor was left to rust in a field. The sight of that beautiful old machine falling apart was more than Dale could bear. In 2011 he bought the tractor and hauled it home.

With the memory of his machine-loving father in mind, Dale toiled hours at a time on No. 30302. Tanks were rebuilt and welded back in place. The canopy was restored, and rust was scraped away. Paint brought a shine back to the old tractor and, with a full water tank and a roaring blaze in the firebox, it puffed and hissed back to life.

The sight of that beautiful old machine falling apart was more than Dale could bear.

When it came my turn to take the controls of No. 30302, Dale showed me how to put the machine in reverse, then forward. "It takes a bit to get the knack for running a century-old tractor," Dale said.

We rolled along with a *chunka-chunka hiss-hiss* to the end of the lane, where we turned around. Dale had me put the lever into reverse and ease back on the throttle. He steered us back into the lane.

Being there to see old No. 30302 chug and hiss was special for me and my family. My 48-year-old son, John, was as excited as a small child when he took his turn at the controls of the old steamer.

We can all be grateful for people like Dale who possess the skill and determination to bring a rusted hulk back to working life and to share that thrill with family and friends. ☀

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LOOKING BACK

Carefree Country Days

Life was simple and sweet on Mamaw and Papaw's farm.

BY CANDY THOMPSON Kingwood, West Virginia **{Field EDITOR}**



Memories of running through fields on my grandparents' farm as a child well up and embrace me like a soft blanket of comfort on days when the world at large can seem overwhelming.

I remember the old barns with haylofts to explore and jumping down from above into mounds of hay. I wandered the fields and found strange rocks to treasure, picked wildflowers and chased busy butterflies, and lay down and watched clouds roll across the blue sky. After plucking berries, I would eat a few and deliver the rest to Mamaw so she could make her delicious homemade cobbler. I waded in the creek to catch minnows or tadpoles and skipped rocks—one, two or three times if you held your mouth just right.

In the evening darkness, I found joy in catching lightning bugs in an old jar. I hiked up to the hayfield and counted the stars in the night sky, feeling lucky to see a random shooting star and to say hello to the man in the moon.



There were happy days riding on the old tractor or in the hay wagon. I chased chickens and gathered their eggs without getting pecked at. I picked apples in the orchard—juicy cherries, too, sweet and sour ones.

These are the memories money can't buy. I hope everyone gets the chance to experience the country in this way at least once in their lifetime.

I will always cherish and hold deep in my heart those innocent and carefree days, those simple times filled with joyful moments on Mamaw and Papaw's farm. ☀

The old hay barn on the farm (top); fun family time at Mamaw's with Uncle Gene, brothers Dale, Dave and Dennis, cousin Kathy, sister Janet, and me.

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ANIMAL TALES

Puppy Love



An amazing coincidence helped us close one chapter and embark on a new one. **BY DEANNA SEVERS** South Portland, Maine

In early spring 2013, my husband, Paul, and I learned our adopted 9-year-old Rottweiler, Hans Michael, had cancer. Our hearts were broken to say the least. It was a long, grueling summer as we watched our cherished dog slowly slip away from us. We took him on short rides that he loved and looked forward to, but he soon became too weak to get into our SUV and could no longer ride. We then spent time with him each afternoon close to

our pond in our backyard, but sadly his activities became limited as the cancer took its toll.

In the early morning hours of Aug. 13, we called our veterinarian after a difficult night with Hans Michael. We agreed that it was time to let him go. Late that afternoon, we said our goodbyes to Hans as the tears flowed down our faces.

My husband and I were retired and our children were grown. Our home here in Maine felt empty after Hans left us. It was the first time we were without a dog.

A few weeks later, we began to search for a new dog to love. We knew at our ages that we could no longer raise a large animal, but we wanted a dog that reminded us of our Hans. After an exhaustive search, we found one online we fell in love with—a carlin pinscher that looked like a Rottweiler. This dog was located in Pennsylvania, and we emailed the owner and left him our phone number. The owner called us the following evening, and what we learned shocked us.

On Aug. 13, this mahogany and black carlin pinscher was born in a small town in Pennsylvania. Baby Nick took his first breath that hot summer day, the same day our Hans Michael took his last. We do believe this little dog was meant to be ours! We told the owner we wanted to adopt Nick, and when he was ready in October we flew him to our home in Maine.

Excitedly, we stood together at the airport in Portland waiting for our little black angel in a fur coat to arrive, and arrive he did. And now it is two older folks bringing up baby! Our hearts are full, and we are loving every minute of it. ☀



When our first dog, Hans, (above) passed away, we felt his spirit lived on in our new puppy, Nick (left).

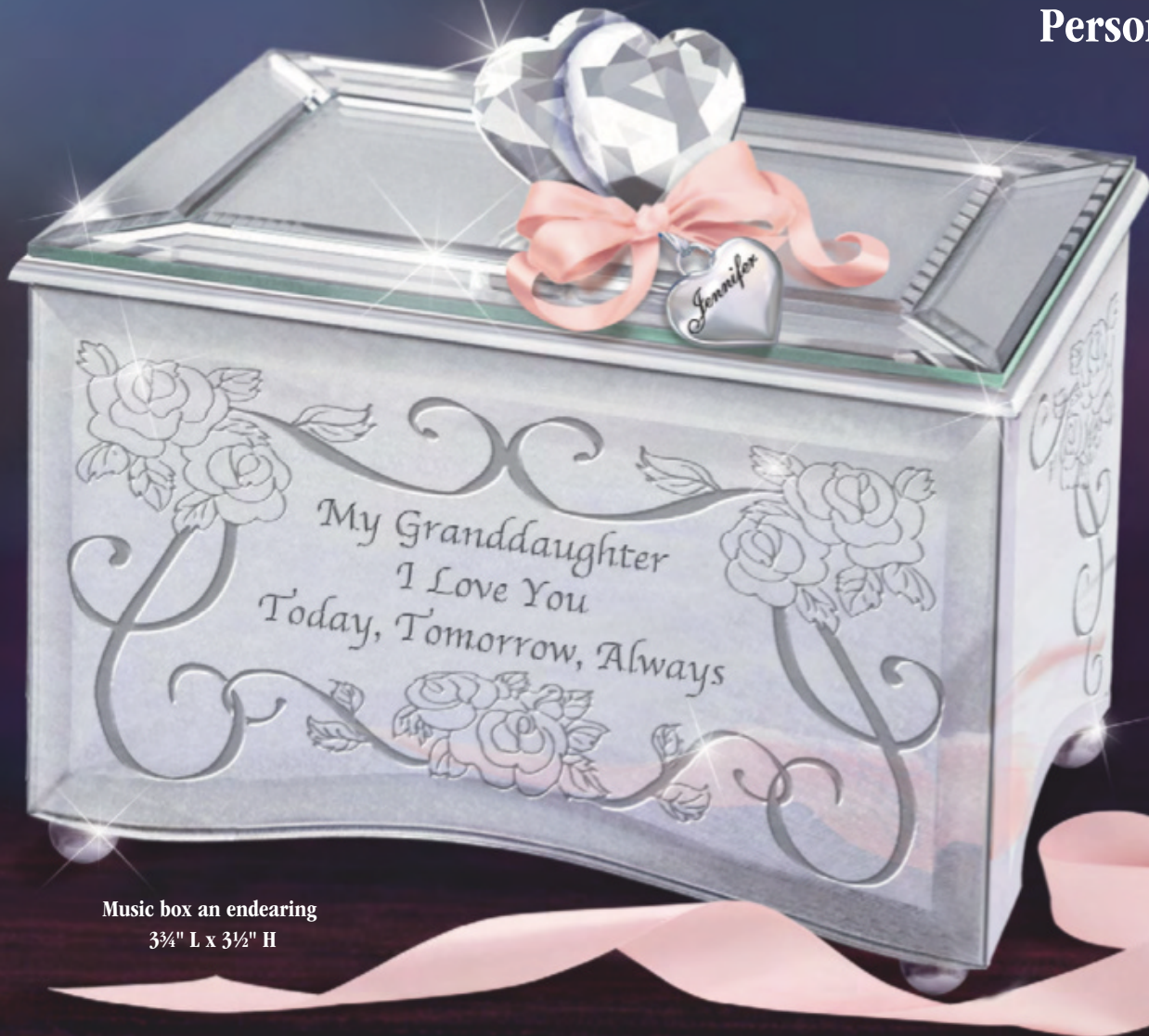
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3. _____	3. _____
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HUMOR

The Art of the Squeal

Daddy's lesson in negotiation tactics backfired when he didn't follow his own advice.

BY JOSHUA SMITH Jasper, Georgia

Every Saturday morning, just outside the town of Centre, Alabama, people from hundreds of miles around meet at one of the biggest flea markets in the United States.

Here they congregate to sell everything under the sun—from bootleg movies to farm animals. One day when I was just a kid, Mama and Daddy loaded us all into her little Honda and headed there for a fun family outing.

"Now remember," Dad told me on the drive over, "people will try to get as much money from you as

they can. They'll try to sell you something that has flaws. But if you know what to look for, you can always spot them."

"Well, what would I look for, Daddy?" I asked innocently.

"Oh, it's easy. They always act real uninterested in what they're selling. Sometimes they'll yawn real big. And they'll price it real low to sell it easier. Remember, if it seems too good to be true, it is."

We arrived around 7 a.m. and all piled out of the car. We ambled among the rows of animals and goods till we came across an old man with a single pig tied to a

stake. He nodded, and he and my dad exchanged greetings.

"How much you want for your pig there?" Daddy asked.

"Aw, I dunno." The old man yawned real big. "Wasn't even thinking too much about selling him. How does 10 dollars sound?"

Daddy's eyes bugged out of his head. He had the money in the old man's hand and the pig in his arms before I could blink.

"Joe, where are we going to put that thing?" Mama asked. "We drove my car, remember?"

Daddy chuckled. "He's so calm and laid back. I'll sit in the back

ILLUSTRATION BY QUERINA BABBO

and hold him on the ride. He'll probably sleep the whole way."

We left shortly after that because as Daddy explained, "That old man might change his mind."

It wasn't until we reached the Georgia state line that we realized the man had probably left right before we did, and for good reason. That's when a horrible odor wafted to the front of the car.

"Oh, Joe," Mama griped as she rolled her window down.

"Hey, it wasn't me," Daddy said. "It was the pig. The pig!"

About that time, the swine burst into frenzied action. He bounced straight up and crashed right down on Daddy's lap with his sharp hooves extended.

For 10 minutes, the car was filled with loud grunts, high-pitched squealing and panting as the pig went berserk in the backseat.

We got pulled over not long after that. The officer got out of his car and approached our car. Gasping for air, Daddy poked his head

outside the window; the pig popped its head out right beside him, grinning slightly.

The officer stopped in his tracks, then slowly backed up to his car to call for back up. After 30 long minutes, a police supervisor and a citation for driving erratically with an unrestrained animal in a motor

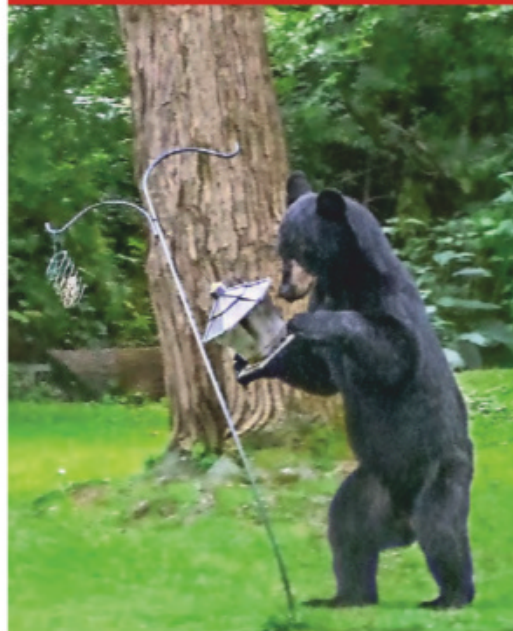
vehicle, we returned to the road.

The next weekend we were back at the flea market, the pig tied to a stake in front of the truck.

"How much do you want for the pig?" one man asked us.

"Gosh, I don't know," Daddy yawned and gave his head a scratch. "How about five dollars?" ⚙

Now That's Funny!



Hangry Bears

You know it's spring when the bears come out for a snack after a long winter's nap. This bear bent the shepherd's hook to get better leverage to wrestle the bird feeder off the hook. Note that the feeder is completely in his paws.

He then proceeded to head toward the woods with the bird feeder. I yelled out, "Hey you can't take that." He dropped it and left with his buddy into the woods, probably thinking, *Next time I'm coming at night.*

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Summer Wandering

Our readers discover the wonders of America.





1. FULL STEAM AHEAD!

My children Olivia and Desmond and nephew Cody watch the classic steam engine arrive at the Pennsylvania Strasburg Rail Road.

FAITH KICKERY
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

2. MOUNTAIN VIEWS

A week hiking in Glacier National Park was a dream come true. The cloud over Logan's Pass slowly lifted as I ascended up the path.

JULIE DERBY
Pacific Junction, Iowa

3. NATURAL WONDER

I loved seeing the effect of the mist from the falls while visiting Niagara Falls State Park.

DAPHNE HALL
Huntland, Tennessee

4. BUS STOP

On a family camping trip out West, my dad, Kearney Smith, posed by a bus in Yellowstone National Park. He used to drive one of the buses to transport tourists back in 1955.

ELIZABETH BOULTER
Burnsville, North Carolina



5. LIVING HISTORY

I was happy to stroll around Hovander Homestead Park and take in the gardens, the fields, the barns and the animals on this preserved pioneer farm.

MELANIE BEILNER
Ferndale, Washington



6. FAMILY TRAVELS

My husband, Mike, kids Kirsten and Jake, nephew and niece Christian and Trinity, and I had an awesome time exploring the trails in Congaree National Park.

AMBER TEVEPAUGH
 Mooresville, North Carolina

7. BLAST FROM THE PAST

My daughter Ariana looks forward to Iowa's annual Greenridge Steam and Gas Antique Show and doesn't miss a chance to climb aboard the People Mover.

RACHEL SWENSEN
Harlan, Iowa



Photos continue on page 58

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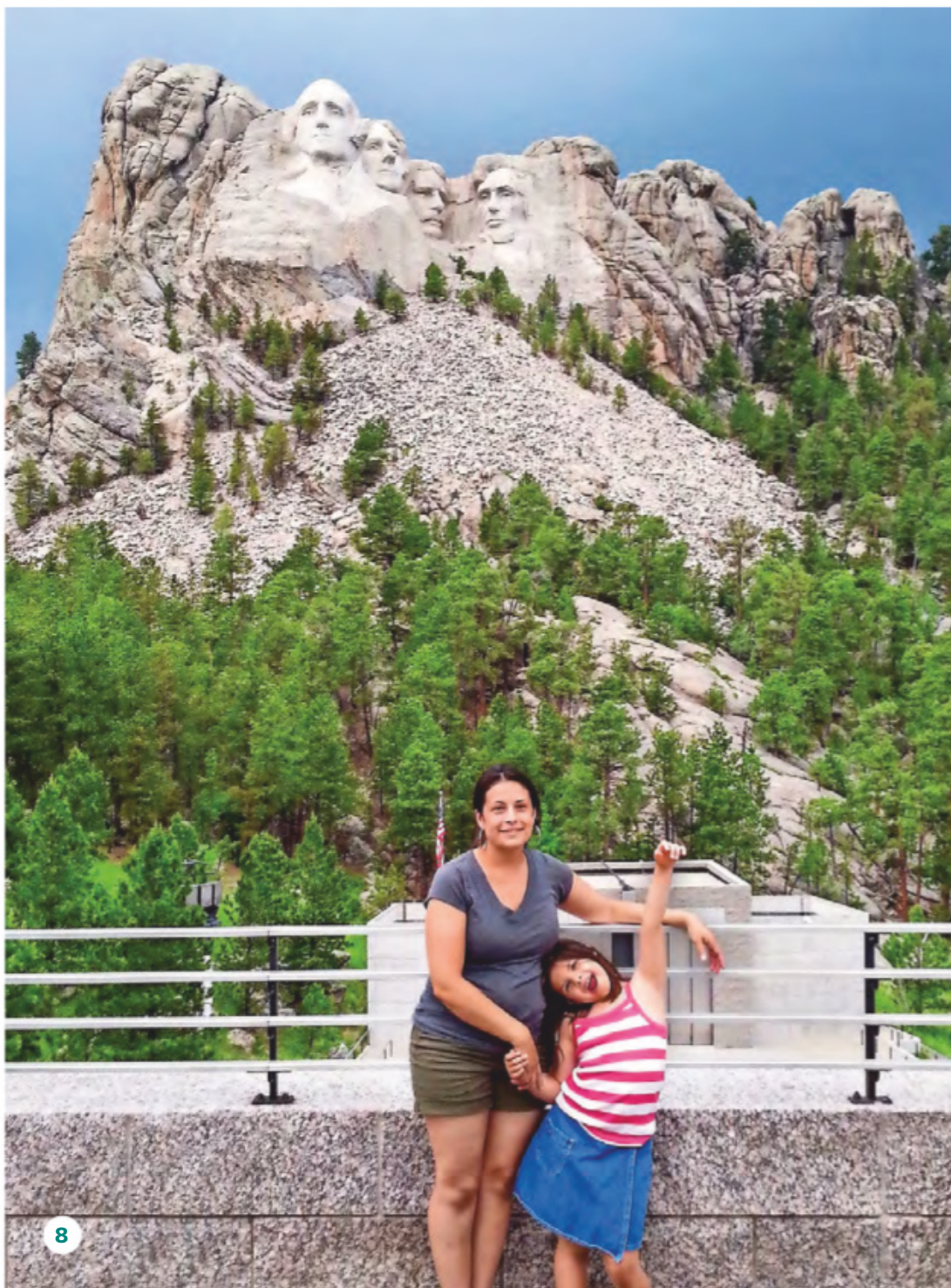
This was the first moment my daughter Camille and I saw Mount Rushmore. It was an amazing experience. I teared up when I got close to the presidents.

ALEJANDRA CARRENO
Brookfield, Wisconsin

9. STARRY, STARRY NIGHT

A friend and I spent the night near Theodore Roosevelt National Park and had a wonderful time photographing this rock formation and the Milky Way.

KATHERINE PLESSNER
Verona, North Dakota





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"I have had five pairs of expensive hearing aids and MDHearingAids are just as good," adds retired neurosurgeon Dr. Brian L.

Doctors Are Tired of Watching Their Patients Waste Money on Over-Priced Clinic Hearing Aids

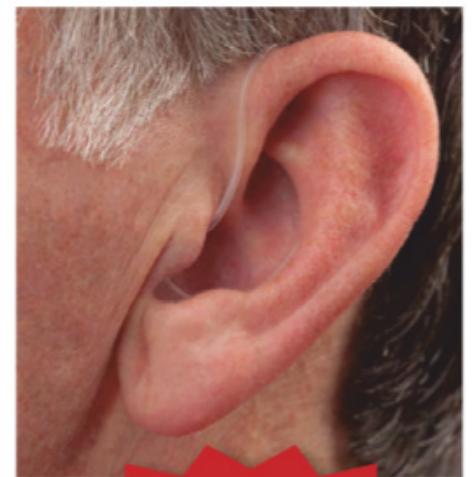
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Lessons of Love

A chance meeting leads to new friends, new skills and a family's grateful thanks. **BY LORI AND KATIE SHELDON** Borger, Texas

{Field}
EDITOR

Looking around the room of people selling crafts, jellies and baked goods at the arts and craft sale, I couldn't help smiling. I had been looking for something like this ever since we moved to our small town in northern Texas. I hoped that somewhere in this mix of people there was a new friend for my daughter Katie and for me.

After visiting numerous booths, we met Mrs. Cates, an older woman selling her artwork. She and Katie hit it off right away. I asked if she would teach my child to draw, and she said, "Sure, and you both need to come visit me." We took her up on her offer and began a delightful friendship that continues to be a blessing to our family 10 years later.

In addition to drawing lessons, Mrs. Cates has also instructed Katie in painting, sewing, cooking, canning and other various crafts. Mrs. Cates has taken my child under her wing as if she were Katie's dear aunt. When Katie was interested in sewing a fancy dress that was beyond her ability, Mrs. Cates sewed it for her. We have been continually amazed at her care and understanding of a young girl's heart.

As Mrs. Cates has introduced us to more friends at the Opportunity Center, a senior citizens facility where she had been the director and where she still regularly leads an art class, we have found that she is as comfortable with older people as she is with children.

We were thrilled to learn that Mrs. Cates had been raised close to our former home in the South Texas countryside. She has shared



Mrs. Cates, right, teaches art at the Opportunity Center; Katie and Mom show off the dress made by Mrs. Cates; one of Mrs. Cates' drawings in progress.



stories with us about her family's 36-acre farm. While her daddy served overseas during World War II, she helped her mother and siblings run the farm. Mrs. Cates' early life wasn't all work though. She also had fun at family get-togethers packed with delicious homemade food.

Our family is so thankful for her influence in our lives. Mrs. Cates has faithfully attended many

special occasions for Katie, and we have been there for her life events as well, particularly her 80th birthday celebration.

Over the years she has shared the lovely gift of being herself in countless little ways. Many of the things she has demonstrated to us we have shared with others—the crafts, the canning, the sewing and, most of all, the joy of being a blessing to others. ☀

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Hello, Operator?

My great-grandmother kept the party lines open in rural Boone County. **BY NANCY DUGGAN** Warrenton, Virginia

In 1881, the year my great-grandmother Margaret Susan “Susie” Widner was born, the United States had three presidents: Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur. Hayes was the first president to have a telephone installed in the White House, and President Herbert Hoover was the first to have one on his desk. Telephones featured in Susie’s destiny, too.

Susie’s good reputation was much admired, so when a gadget called a telephone was introduced to the hills in the early 1900s, she was chosen to connect neighbor to neighbor. She was one of the first telephone operators in Boone County, Arkansas.

Our family’s first telephone, a hand-cranked oak box, still hangs in my cousin’s house in Arkansas. The phone is a testament to our pioneering great-grandmother.

Susie lived her entire life off a road built by the Works Progress Administration. Today only butter-colored daffodils bloom where her house once stood atop ancient limestone. Built by her husband, William Rufus Riddle, and a host of family members and neighbors, Great-Grandma’s home claimed four small rooms under a tin roof.

A black wood-burning cooker ruled the kitchen while the “living room” featured a feather bed and a potbellied stove for warmth in the frostiest winters.

Like many of that time, the Riddles were self-sufficient and purchased very little from the store—mostly flour, sugar and coffee—always with fair barter or cash. Susie made her own soups and soaps.



This old-style hand-crank phone is like the one used by Susie (at left with Nancy).

ringing bells and usually a transcribed electrical response from someone on the other end. Each home had its own ring sequence, however all rang at the same time.

Even with an operator, local circuits had no privacy. Anyone could pick up and listen to an ongoing conversation, but with Susie at the horn, eavesdropping was kept to a minimum. She insisted on privacy for all, and gossip wasn’t tolerated. Simple respect went a long way—perhaps farther than the telephone itself. ⚙️

During that time, most rural telephone service consisted of at least eight parties on a line. On the wall next to Susie’s bed hung the large oak box housing a magneto hand-cranked generator. Turning the crank generated current, some



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No purchase necessary to enter to win. Purchase will not improve your chances of winning. Sweepstakes is open to legal residents age 18 years or older of the U.S., its territories and possessions. Sweepstakes begins on July 8, 2020, and ends on Sept. 23, 2020. For official rules, visit country-magazine.com. VOID WHERE PROHIBITED. Sweepstakes sponsored by RDA Enthusiast Brands, LLC.

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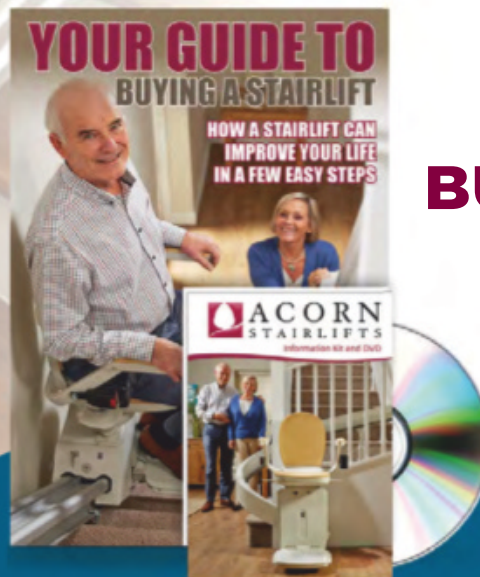
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Grandchildren Howie and Elsa follow Great Aunt Jane's tip: Singe the roots of an onion to prolong storage life.

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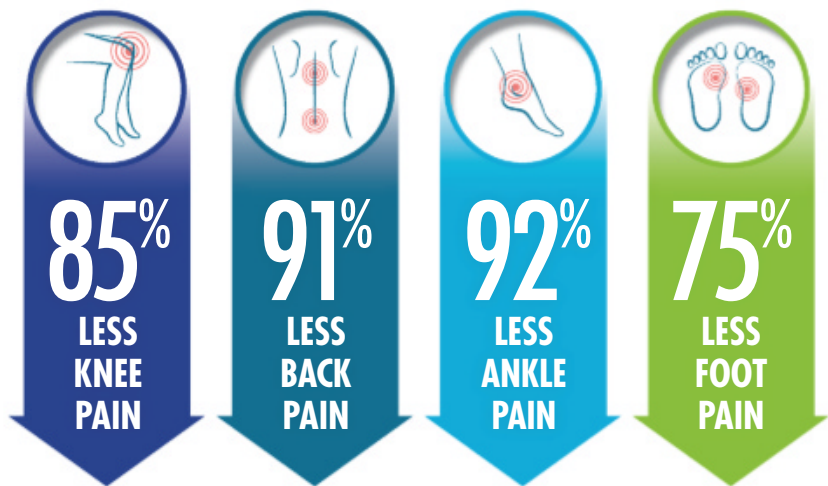
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